# D. CULTURAL RESOURCES

## ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

### *PREHISTORIC CONTEXT*

The coastal Southern California region contains an archaeological record that represents a wide array of cultural traditions spanning much of the Holocene Epoch (approximately 10,000 years ago to the present). The coastal landscape throughout the Southern California coast, especially during the early to mid-Holocene, featured lagoons, large estuaries, and bays harboring a rich community of life, such as mollusk, fish, and waterfowl. Wallace (1955) suggested four prehistoric periods for coastal Southern California, referred to as horizons, which emphasize the archaeological cultures and the relationships between them. These horizons, although highly simplified and generalized, are useful in that they reflect important changes in the material culture of prehistoric southern Californians. The four periods are briefly described below:

**Horizon I.** San Dieguito Horizon, is the earliest period, with sites distributed in San Diego County, the Colorado Desert, and northward along the California coast. This horizon dates between 8,500 before present (BP) and 9,000 BP. The San Dieguito deposits are characterized by a lack of grinding implements and suggest that cultures that exploitated marine and littoral resources existed locally prior to 7,000 years ago.

**Horizon II.** The next period, often referred to as the Millingstone Horizon or Encinitas Tradition, occurred from about 8,000 BP to 3,000 BP. Periodic climatic changes may have driven the cultural changes marking the onset of Horizon II. Increased dependence on plant foods is reflected by the frequent presence of seed processing tools, manos, and metates. Projectile points are rare and usually suggest use of the atlatl (spear thrower). The technological and economic focus that represented this horizon proved to be a stable strategy that lasted roughly 5,000 years.

**Horizon III.** The third prehistoric period, known as the Intermediate Horizon, was relatively well developed in the Orange County area. Horizon III is characterized by the introduction of small projectile points, suggesting increased hunting and the advent of the bow and arrow. True maritime exploitation and occupation of the Channel Islands began during this period. Horizon III dates roughly from 3,000 to 1,000 years BP.

**Horizon IV.** The final prehistoric horizon began about 1,000 BP and ended with the arrival of Europeans. In Orange County, the prehistoric period ended with the overland expedition of Portola in 1769. Horizon IV is marked by large increases in population, greater production of art work, and permanently occupied villages. The period from 1000 BC to AD 750 is known as the Intermediate Horizon (Chambers, 2000). During this horizon, mortars and pestles appeared, indicating the beginning of acorn exploitation. Use of the acorn, a high-calorie, storable food source, probably allowed greater sedentism and a higher level of social organization. Large projectile points indicate that the bow and arrow, a hallmark of Horizon IV, had not yet been

introduced, and hunting was likely accomplished using the atlatl. Settlement patterns during this time are not well understood. The semisedentary settlement pattern characteristic of Horizon IV may have begun during the Intermediate Horizon, although lower population densities may have limited local territoriality.

## *BALLONA WETLANDS PREHISTORY*

Recent studies of landscape evolution in the Ballona Wetlands area of Southern California have revealed more detailed settlement information unique to the Westchester Bluffs. Homburg et al. (2001) conducted a geoarchaeological analysis though extensive augering to reconstruct the succession of landforms and their effect on human occupation. Three distinct cultural adaptations were identified as they relate to a particular stage of landscape and lagoonal development over the last 7,000 years:

- Early Period (7,000–3,000 BP) marked by short-term, bluff-top occupations overlooking a shallow bay or lagoon
- Middle Period (3,000–1,000 BP), characterized by an influx of population distributed on bluff-top and creek-edge settings
- Late Period (1,000–200 BP), marked by population aggregation around the lagoon

Estuarine conditions prevailed at the present-day Ballona Wetlands until lagoon development began, around 6,200 BP; at that time the lagoon began to slowly fill with alluvium, until around 2,000 BP. As a result, human settlement tended to move westward through time; initial occupation began on the Baldwin Hills, shifted in the Middle Period to the Westchester Bluffs, and ended with large settlements at the mouth of Centinela Creek and the Ballona Lagoon (Homburg et al., 2001).

## *HISTORIC SETTING*

Although the Spanish inaugurated their system of missions in Alta California in 1769, the first Spanish explorers in this region visited the coastline much earlier (Chambers, 2000). Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo arrived in 1542, followed by Pedro de Unamuno in 1587, Sebastian Rodriguez Cermeño in 1595, and Sebastian Vizcaíno in 1602. After Vizcaíno's visit, 167 years passed before Europeans again explored the Alta California coastline; the first mission, at San Diego, was founded on the heels of the Gaspar de Portolá land expedition in 1769 (Chambers, 2000). Native American inhabitants of the Los Angeles Basin were taken to Mission San Gabriel, constructed in 1771 (Chambers, 2000), and were called Gabrielinos by the Spanish because of their association with the mission.

The Spanish government made several large land grants in the Los Angeles Basin, but much of the land was not granted until Mexico gained independence in 1822 and the mission holdings were secularized in 1834. The current project area is located near the historic boundary between two Mexican ranchos: the 22,459-acre Sausal Redondo grant of 1837, and the 13,920-acre

Ballona grant of 1839 (Chambers, 2000). The Ballona rancho may have carried over from an earlier Spanish grant (Chambers, 2000), with the name derived from the claimants' home city of Bayona in northern Spain (Chambers, 2000). The smaller 2,219-acre Aguaje de la Centinela grant of 1844 (Chambers, 2000) was situated just east of the project area.

During the Mexican administration of Alta California, the early pueblo of Los Angeles was located in the area west of the present-day Union Station downtown (Chambers, 2000). The rest of the surrounding lands were divided into ranchos largely devoted to livestock and cultivation. California became an American state in 1850, but the population of Southern California remained relatively low through the 1860s and 1870s, with cattle ranching continuing as the principal economic activity. However, a period of drought and expensive land title defense cases in U.S. courts resulted in the sale of many of the cattle ranches to Anglo-Americans.

Immigration to Southern California increased substantially after Los Angeles was connected by the Southern Pacific Railroad to the transcontinental Central Pacific Railroad in San Francisco in 1876 (Chambers, 2000). The Southern Pacific Railroad completed its own transcontinental connection from Los Angeles through Yuma in 1881 (Chambers, 2000). During the 1880s, towns were hastily formed and land was sold by real estate developers to new arrivals from the east. Land speculation escalated as the second transcontinental railroad, the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe, reached Los Angeles in 1886. The two railroads vied for customers by waging a fare war, encouraging many people to move to Southern California.

The original Ballona Lagoon (now MDR) was proposed several times as the location of a commercial port facility for Los Angeles (Chambers, 2000). With backing from the Santa Fe Railroad, Moses L. Wickes made the first proposal in 1886, investing $300,000 in the "La Ballona" project (Chambers, August 2000). The attempt failed, but the idea was revived under the name Playa del Rey (PDR) in 1902 (Chambers, 2000). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers studied the lagoon in 1916, but concluded that its development as a commercial harbor was not feasible. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors commissioned another study in 1936, but later decided to concentrate all commercial port facilities at Los Angeles and Long Beach Harbors. During the late 1940s, the Corps of Engineers initiated a feasibility study for a recreational boat harbor at the lagoon. The MDR harbor and channel were created by dredging the lagoon, but the marina and associated breakwater were not completed until 1965 (Chambers, 2000).

The first producing well in the PDR gas storage field was completed in 1929. By 1930, the field contained 141 producing wells. During 1934 and 1935, 50 additional wells were drilled in the Del Rey Hills area. During World War II, the federal government assumed control of the field. The Southern California Gas (SCG) Company acquired the field in 1953 as surplus government property; however, SCG began operations at the field in 1942 (Chambers, 2000). Since that time, parcels not occupied by gas wells have been developed as residential properties.

Three historic resources located within one mile of the MDR portion of the project area are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Venice Canal Historic District, Warren Wilson Beach House, and American Trona Corporation building (Chambers, 2000). All three are located north of and beyond the project area and would not be affected by the proposed sale. The Venice Canals were created in 1905 as part of a unique residential subdivision. The Venice Canal System is also listed as City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 270. The Warren Wilson Beach House is also located in Venice. The American Trona building was constructed in 1916 as a storage facility for raw salt.

Twelve additional historic resources are located within one mile of the overall project area, including a streetcar depot and 11 residential structures (Chambers, 2000). None of these resources have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. None occur within the boundaries of the project area.

There are no California Historical Landmarks or California Points of Historical Interest listed within a one-mile radius of the project area (Chambers, 2000). One of the prehistoric archaeological sites located within a one-mile radius of the project area, CA-LAN-47, is also listed as City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 490, the site of the Gabrielino village of Sa-Angna.

### *ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT*

The project area is located within territory that was occupied by the Gabrielino Native American group when Europeans first arrived in the region (Bean & Smith, 1978). Gabrielino settlement and subsistence patterns may extend back to the beginning Horizon IV, about AD 750. The Gabrielino were semi-sedentary hunters and gatherers.

Coastal groups collected shellfish and fished for estuary, nearshore, and kelp-bed species. Dried fish and shellfish were exchanged for inland products such as acorns. The nuts were pounded into flour using stone mortars and pestles and then cooked as soup or gruel. Seeds from sage, grasses, goosefoot, and buckwheat were ground with stone manos and metates. Deer, rabbits, birds, and marine mammals were hunted using the bow and arrow, nets, traps, and snares.

The Gabrielino lived in villages of up to 200 people near permanent water sources and a variety of food resources (Bean & Smith, 1978). The village acted as the center of a territory from which resources were gathered. Small groups left the village for short periods to hunt, fish, and gather plant foods, as well as collect raw materials for tools, housing, and other utilitarian needs. While away from the village, they established temporary camps and resource processing locations (Chambers, 2000). Archaeologically, such locations are marked by bedrock mortars for acorn processing, manos and metates for seed grinding, and flaked lithic scatters indicating the manufacturing or maintenance of stone tools (usually of chert) used in hunting or butchering. Overnight stays in these field camps are indicated by fire-affected rock resulting from use in hearths (Chambers, 2000).

## *ARCHIVAL METHODS*

A records search of pertinent survey and site data was conducted at the South Central Coastal Information Center, Fullerton, California. The records were accessed using the Venice, California U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute quadrangle map, unsectioned, Township 2S, Range 15W. The review included the PDR and MDR sites along with a one-quarter-mile buffer that constituted the project area. Previous surveys, studies, and archaeological site records were accessed as they pertained to the project area. Properties within the project area listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historic Resources, the California Inventory of Historic Resources (1976), the California Historical Landmarks (1996), and the California Points of Historical Interest (1992) were searched.

## *ARCHIVAL FINDINGS*

Twenty-eight archaeological sites have been recorded within a one-mile radius of the project area. Of these, 23 are prehistoric archaeological sites and six are historic archaeological sites.

Six prehistoric sites are located within the boundaries of the PDR portion of the project area: CA-LAN-63, CA-LAN-64, CA-LAN-65, CA-LAN-203, CA-LAN-204, and CA-LAN-206. These sites are summarized below in **Table 4.D-1**. All six sites are situated in the northern half of this portion of the project area, between Gulana Avenue on the west and Hastings Avenue on the east, placing some of these known site locations within a quarter-mile of the 36 lots proposed for sale. None of the known sites were identified within the footprints of the lots. This area is located on top of the bluff that overlooks the Ballona Creek drainage to the north, which would have served as an optimal location for exploiting Ballona Creek wetland resources. The locations of the 36 lots were compared with the mapped locations of these prehistoric sites, and none of the parcels are within the boundaries of the prehistoric sites. These sites have been largely destroyed as a result of bluff erosion and housing development. Thus, the sale and future development of these parcels would not result in adverse impacts on any of these known resources. However, previously unrecorded subsurface archaeological resources could be present within the individual parcels.

No archaeological sites have been recorded within the MDR portion of the project area. Prehistoric archaeological sites are not expected within the former Ballona Lagoon and wetlands, which were dredged and filled in 1965 to form the marina.

## *NATIVE AMERICAN CONSULTATION*

The Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) was contacted on October 10, 2003 in order to request a database search for sacred lands or other cultural properties of significance to local Native Americans. The sacred lands survey failed to indicate the presence of cultural resources in the project area. The NAHC provided a list of Native American contacts that may have further knowledge of the project area with respect to cultural resources and potential impacts to those resources that could occur as a result of the proposed sale. Each person or organization listed on

**TABLE 4.D-1**
**PREHISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES RECORDED WITHIN THE PLAYA DEL REY PORTION OF THE PROJECT AREA**

| Trinomial Site Designation | Initially Recorded | Site Type | Site Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| CA-LAN-63 | 6/5/50 | Village site | Ground stone artifacts; midden soils |
| CA-LAN-64 | 6/5/50 | Habitation site | Ground and flaked stone artifacts and shell |
| CA-LAN-65 | 6/5/50 | Habitation site | Ground and flaked stone artifacts and shell |
| CA-LAN-203 | 6/5/53 | Seed processing site | Ground stone artifacts (metates) |
| CA-LAN-204 | 6/5/53 | Not defined | None available |
| CA-LAN-206 | 6/5/53 | Seed processing site | Ground stone artifacts (manos, metates, and cogstones) |

SOURCE: South Central Coastal Information Center, California State University Fullerton, California.

the NAHC list was contacted by letter requesting information about locations of importance to Native Americans. No responses have been received as of the writing of this document. If, as planning proceeds, further information or concerns relevant to the project are presented from a NAHC contact, further consultation between the lead agency and the contact is recommended.

## *SURVEY METHODS AND FINDINGS*

The surface of each lot was examined by ESA's archaeologist for constituents of archaeological sites, such as artifacts, features or facilities, and/or culturally modified soil horizons. Due to the extensive built setting and landscape cover, visibility of the native surface was minimal to zero. No archaeological materials were identified during this survey.

Because the project is to be located within built environments, the utility of pedestrian archaeological survey methods is diminished due to the lack of native soil and topographic visibility. Moreover, much of PDR and MDR has been subjected to landfill, which has obscured the visibility of the native surface. Archaeological sites can consist of extensive subsurface components that would be difficult to localize without test excavations. Under such circumstances, construction monitoring by qualified archaeological monitors may be substituted for survey, evaluation/testing, or data recovery.

With respect to historic resources, the nature of the proposed sale—that is, the sale of the lots themselves—would not directly or indirectly impact structures or properties. The residences that are adjacent to the lots are modern—that is, less than fifty years old—and do not possess

elements that would constitute eligibility for historical significance. Consequently, no impact to built historical resources for the proposed sale is expected. Nevertheless, this does not preclude the existence of subsurface historical resources in the project area.

### *PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES*

The top of the bluff within the PDR portion of the project area is underlain by late Quaternary dune sand (unit Qs), while the slope at the northern margin of the project area is underlain by the marine Palos Verdes Sand, which stratigraphically underlies the dune sand (Chambers, 2000). The archives of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County Vertebrate Paleontology Section indicate that no fossils have been reported from the dune sand anywhere within the USGS Venice 7.5-minute quadrangle. Moreover, no vertebrate fossil sites have been reported in the dune sand (Chambers, 2000). The lack of any previously recorded fossil sites suggests that the potential is low for late Pleistocene fossil remains to occur in the project area where underlain by dune sand.

However, several previously recorded fossil sites do occur in the Palos Verdes Sand, including Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County Vertebrate Paleontology Section fossil site 1024, Invertebrate Paleontology Section fossil site 59, and others, which occur immediately east of the project area along the western side of Lincoln Avenue (Chambers, 2000). These fossil sites yielded the fossilized remains of 300 species of late Pleistocene (Ice Age) shallow-water marine invertebrates, including snails and clams; the fossilized bones and teeth of marine vertebrate species, including fishes, sharks, seals, and porpoises; the fossilized bones of birds; and the fossilized bones of a land mammal species (gopher). These fossil occurrences indicate that the potential is high for late Pleistocene fossil remains to occur along the northern margin of the PDR portion of the project area where underlain by the Palos Verdes Sand.

By contrast, little or no potential for such fossils is indicated by the geological character of the MDR portion of the project area, which is comprised of dune sand and fill materials dredged from Ballona Lagoon during construction of the marina.

### *HUMAN REMAINS*

No verifiable evidence exists to conclusively demonstrate that human remains do not exist on the SCG parcels. However, given the history of development in the area and the lack of burial sites recorded in the vicinity, the presence of human remains is unlikely.

### *HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE (AS DEFINED IN CEQA GUIDELINES SECTION 15064.5)*

No areas of historical significance are known to exist on the 36 lots proposed for sale.

## APPLICABLE REGULATIONS, PLANS, AND POLICIES

The *Westchester-Playa del Rey Plan*, which is part of the *General Plan of the City of Los Angeles*, contains the following provision under Cultural Heritage Resources (City of Los Angeles, 1974):

- Review potential resource impacts through the County and City's Environmental Guidelines and require appropriate environmental documentation and reasonable mitigation measures as determined by the Department of City Planning and the State Historic Preservation Office.

## SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Based on Section 15064.5 and Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project would have significant adverse impacts to cultural resources if the project would:

- Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Section 15064.5;
- Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a unique archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5;
- Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature; or
- Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries.

CEQA Guidelines 15064.5 provides that, in general, a resource not listed on state or local register of historical resources shall be considered by the lead agency to be historically significant if the resource meets the criteria for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources. This section also provides standards for determining what constitutes a "substantial adverse change" that must be considered a significant impact on archaeological or historic resources.

According to the CEQA Guidelines 15064.5(a)(3), a resource shall generally be considered "historically significant" if the resource meets the criteria for listing on the California Register of Historic Resources (Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, California Code of Regulations, Section 4852). When a project would affect an archeological site, it must be determined whether the site is a historical resource, which is defined as any site which:

(a) Is historically or archaeologically significant, or is significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, or cultural annals of California; and

(b) Meets any of the following criteria:

1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage;
2. Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past;

3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values; or

4. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

In addition, a resource included in a local register of historical resources, as defined by Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k) or identified as significant in a historical resource survey meeting the requirements of PRC Section 5024.l(g), shall be presumed to be historically or culturally significant.

CEQA also requires lead agencies to consider whether projects would affect "unique archaeological resources." Public Resources Code Section 21083.2(g), states that 'unique archaeological resource' means an archaeological artifact, object, or site about which it can be clearly demonstrated that, without merely adding to the current body of knowledge, there is a high probability that it meets any of the following criteria:

1. Contains information needed to answer important scientific research questions and that there is a demonstrable public interest in that information.

2. Has a special and particular quality such as being the oldest of its type or the best available example of its type.

3. Is directly associated with a scientifically recognized important prehistoric or historic event or person."

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

**Impact D.1: Future development of the lots could cause substantial adverse changes to the significance of currently unknown cultural resources. (Less than significant with recommended mitigation)**

Although the present survey and previously conducted surveys did not reveal new cultural resources at the proposed lots, these surveys may not conclusively demonstrate the nonexistence of subsurface cultural resources on the project site. Traditional foot survey methods are constrained due to variation in the natural landscape, such as grass cover and grazing that can obscure surface evidence. Moreover, the Westchester bluffs and the surrounding area have experienced a long period of human occupation and landscape change. Significant artifactual, ecofactual (i.e., plant and animal remains), and geofactual (i.e., soils, sediments, and minerals) evidence of this occupation can be revealed whenever subsurface activity takes place. If historical resources, unique archaeological resources, or traditional cultural properties do exist on the project site, grading and other construction-related activities could cause significant impacts to the scientific value of those resources.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure D.1: Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15064.5(f), provisions for historical or unique archaeological resources accidentally discovered during construction shall be instituted. In the event that prehistoric or historic subsurface cultural resources are discovered during ground-disturbing activities, all work within 50 feet of the**

**resources shall be halted and the City shall consult with a qualified archaeologist or paleontologist to assess the significance of the find. If any find is determined to be significant, representatives of the City and the qualified archaeologist and/or paleontologist shall meet to determine the appropriate avoidance measures or other appropriate mitigation. All significant cultural materials recovered shall be subject to scientific analysis, professional museum curation, and a report prepared by the qualified archaeologist according to current professional standards. (Recommended for future development)**

**If the discovery includes human remains, CEQA Guidelines 15064.5 (e)(1) shall be followed, which includes:**

**(e) In the event of the accidental discovery or recognition of any human remains in any location other than a dedicated cemetery, the following steps shall be taken:**

**(1) There shall be no further excavation or disturbance of the site or any nearby area reasonably suspected to overlie adjacent human remains until:**

**(A) The coroner of the county in which the remains are discovered must be contacted to determine that no investigation of the cause of death is required, and**

**(B) If the coroner determines the remains to be Native American:**

**1. The coroner shall contact the Native American Heritage Commission within 24 hours.**

**2. The Native American Heritage Commission shall identify the person or persons it believes to be the most likely descended from the deceased Native American.**

**3. The most likely descendent may make recommendations to the landowner or the person responsible for the excavation work, for means of treating or disposing of, with appropriate dignity, the human remains and any associated grave goods as provided in Public Resources Code Section 5097.98, or**

**(2) Where the following conditions occur, the landowner or his authorized representative shall rebury the Native American human remains and associated grave goods with appropriate dignity on the property in a location not subject to further subsurface disturbance.**

**(A) The Native American Heritage Commission is unable to identify a most likely descendent or the most likely descendent failed to make a recommendation within 24 hours after being notified by the commission.**

**(B) The descendant identified fails to make a recommendation; or**

**(C) The landowner or his authorized representative rejects the recommendation of the descendant, and the mediation by the Native**

**American Heritage Commission fails to provide measures acceptable to the landowner.**

**Significance after Recommended Mitigation:** Less than significant.

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**Impact D.2: Future development could damage or degrade unidentified paleontological remains. (Less than significant with recommended mitigation)**

As mentioned above, the geological character of the MDR portion of the project area is comprised of dune sand and fill materials dredged from Ballona Lagoon during construction of the marina. Consequently, the fossil-bearing potential of the area is substantially reduced. This notwithstanding, significant fossil discoveries can be made even in areas designated as having low potential and could result from the excavation activities related to the proposed project. This impact would be reduced to a less-than-significant level with the incorporation of Recommended Mitigation Measure D.2.

**Recommended Mitigation Measure D.2: The project proponent shall notify a qualified paleontologist of unanticipated discoveries and subsequently document the discovery as needed. In the event of an unanticipated discovery of a breas, true, and/or trace fossil during construction, excavations within 100 feet of the find shall be temporarily halted or diverted until the discovery is examined by a qualified paleontologist. The paleontologist shall notify the appropriate agencies to determine procedures that would be followed before construction is allowed to resume at the location of the find. (Recommended for Future Development)**

**Significance after Recommended Mitigation:** Less than significant.

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## CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

**Impact D.3: Future development on the 36 lots proposed for sale, when combined with other foreseeable development in the vicinity, could result in cumulative impacts with respect to cultural resources. (Less than significant)**

Because the proposed sale would not affect known significant archaeological resources, it would not be likely to cause significant cumulative impacts. Moreover, the combined effects of the implementation of both county and state level regulations that require identification and evaluation of cultural resources as part of environmental review effectively reduces the cumulative impacts that would occur to cultural resources. Because this uniform policy is designed in each case to reduce impacts on cultural resources to below a level of significance on a site-specific basis, cumulative impacts would be less than significant

Therefore, no cumulative impacts related to cultural resources would occur as a result of future development of the 36 lots proposed for sale.

**Mitigation:** None required.

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